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KHALISTANI SUPPORTERS HECKLE INDIAN ENVOY IN NY GURDWARA

Taranjit Singh Sandhu, India's envoy to the US, was heckled by some Khalistanis at a gurdwara in New York he visited for Guru Nanak Jayanti

HECKLERS ASK ENVOY ABOUT NIJJAR'S KILLING

The hecklers, in a video being circulated online, blamed India for killing Khalistani radical Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was shot dead by unknown assailants in Canada in June this year. While Canada, too, accused India of bumping him off, India rubbished the allegation. The hecklers were escorted out of the gurdwara by the members of Sikh community

DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH TO SIKH COMMUNITY

- In his remarks at the gurdwara, Sandhu assured members of the Sikh community that Indian diplomats will provide all help and support to them. He was accompanied by Consul General in NY Randhir Jaiswal
- A media report last week said the US foiled a plot to kill Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, another Khalistani radical and head of Sikhs for Justice

554th

BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF GURU NANAK WAS CELEBRATED ON NOVEMBER 27

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NAVY VETERANS

Keep India in loop: Appeal to Qatar court

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

AN appeal that was admitted by Qatar's Court of First Instance to review the capital punishment it awarded to eight Indian naval veterans, will ensure that the Indian government will be kept in the loop on any action that could be taken against them.

"The appeal that was accepted on November 23 ensures that Qatar will not exercise death penalty on these eight Indian veterans without informing the Indian government. This is being viewed as a positive development," a source said.

The Qatar court had on October 26 awarded death penalty to the naval veterans.

India's defence team is headed by a very senior lawyer. He is a former attorney general of Qatar and is doing whatever he can to repatriate these naval veterans. However, the veterans generally get to meet him in only in court during the day of the hearing.

"The eight naval veterans have little knowledge of what the hearings entail and often ask their family members (during their weekly phone calls they make back home) on whether any date has been earmarked for the penalty. At least now there will be some respite for the families and the veterans," the source said.

The next hearing of the case is due this week. The eight veterans are Commander Amit Nagpal, Commander Purnendu Tiwari, Commander Sugunakar Pakala, Commander Sanjeev Gupta, Capt Navtej Singh Gill, Capt Birendra Kumar Verma, Capt Saurabh Vasisht and sailor Ragesh.

EXPRESS READ

Janaspandana: Over 3K applications received

Bengaluru: In the biggest-ever Janaspandana, CM Siddaramaiah received over 3,800 applications within 6 hours on Monday. The entire State Government machinery had shifted to the CM's official residence as he and bureaucrats tried to resolve issues presented by people | P4

Five of family die by suicide in Tumakuru

Tumakuru: Five members of a family committed suicide because of the alleged harassment by moneylenders in Tumakuru on Sunday. Five suspects have been arrested. The deceased are Gareeb Sab, 46, his wife Sumayya, 33, daughter Hazeera, 14, and sons Shubhan, 9, and Muneer, 11 | P3

Headless Lokpal wakes up to deal with Moitra case

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

ANTI-corruption ombudsman Lokpal, which came into spotlight last week in the Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra case, has been functioning without a fulltime chairperson for over a year. According to a Right to Information (RTI) response dated November 3, the anti-corruption ombudsman has been headless after Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose demitted the office in May last year.

Moreover, three out of eight member posts are vacant. Moitra said while posting the screenshots of the RTI response on microblogging platform X.

In March this year, the Lokpal came in for strong criticism from a Parliament committee for its non-performance and failure to fill the post of chairperson and other members.

According to Section 5 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, "The President shall take or cause to be taken all necessary steps for the appointment of a new Chairperson and Members at least three months before the expiry of the term of the Chairperson or Member, as the case may be, in accordance with the procedure laid down in this Act."

Justice Pradip Kumar Mohanty, a judicial member of Lokpal, is currently the acting chairperson.

The CBI initiated a preliminary enquiry against Moitra on Friday based on the directions of the Lokpal in an alleged cash-for-query case in Parliament to target the Adani group and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the behest of businessman Darshan Hiranandani. BJP MP Nishikant Dubey had approached the Lokpal on October 21 with a complaint against the Trinamool leader over allegations of compromising national security by sharing her Parliament login credentials with unauthorised persons.

While the Lokpal has woken up from slumber in the Moitra case, it has been criticised across party lines.

The parliamentary panel on the Department of Personnel and Training headed by BJP's Sushil Kumar Modi said the body has not prosecuted a single person accused of graft to date and its performance seems to be far from satisfactory.

While the Lokpal Act was passed in 2013, the first Lokpal was appointed in 2019 with eight members. The panel said only three complaints were fully investigated and nearly 90% of the complaints were disposed of. The Lokpal is mandated to constitute a prosecution wing and an enquiry to prosecute guilty public servants. Both are yet to be constituted. The sanctioned strength of the Lokpal is 82 posts against which just 32 are in place.

COMMITTEE TO FIND NEW HEAD IN PLACE

A parliamentary panel has taken a serious view of the details of steps taken to fill the vacancies of the chairperson and two judicial members, which have been vacant. The Centre has appointed Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai as chairperson of a search committee to recommend the chief, members of Lokpal in August

Vertical drilling on, path now clear to resume horizontal

NARENDRA SETHI @ Dehradun

RESCUE workers on Monday intensified their efforts to pull out the 41 labourers trapped in the collapsed Silkyara tunnel since November 12, with the vertical drilling covering up to 38 metres of the total 86 metres to be bored. Officials said the process to cover the remaining depth through vertical drilling is going on as per schedule.

Meanwhile, the authorities are gearing up to resume horizontal drilling, which had to be halted on Saturday after the auger machine broke apart after it got entangled in the rubble through which it was drilling. With the auger machine damaged beyond repair, the horizontal drilling will now be done manually.

On Monday, the damaged pieces of the auger machine were retrieved and removed, paving the way for a special team of miners to enter the horizontal pipe and clear the debris manually.

Dr Neeraj Khairwal, nodal officer of relief and rescue operations in Silkyara and Secretary to the Uttarakhand government, told reporters that the work of cutting the blades, shafts and head of the auger machine has been completed.

After removing the head of the auger machine trapped inside the tunnel, a team of 'rat miners' (experts who specialise in excavation) will carry out the manual drilling. Army engineers will help the special team in this. "Once manual digging starts, it is expected that 1 metre can be drilled in one hour," said Mahmood Ahmed, MD, National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd.

Sources said work is going on on multiple fronts. Apart from the main vertical drilling, an eight-inch wide boring is also being made to understand the nature of the rocks as well as the soil profile of the area.

Meanwhile, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Pramod Kumar Mishra reached Silkyara on Monday to take stock of the relief and rescue operations. Mishra held a meeting with Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Dr S S Sandhu to discuss the future course of action.

An overturned truck being lifted by a crane near the Silkyara tunnel. Inset: Principal secy to the PM P K Mishra reviews rescue efforts | PTI

> It is mandatory to replace the rig after drilling 40-45 metres. Replacement takes 15-20 hours. Therefore, it may not be possible to reach the stranded workers before Thursday
>
> Official source

BBMP SCHOOL COLLAPSES HOURS BEFORE CLASSES

MOHAMMED YACOOB @ Bengaluru

> I went to drop my two daughters, aged 6 and 4, to the school in the morning, but was shocked to see the collapsed building
>
> Mukund Murthy, a parent

A 70-year-old English nursery school building under the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) in Shivajinagar collapsed in the wee hours of Monday.

Had the incident occurred during school hours, the city would have witnessed a major tragedy. The Palike had identified the building, which housed over 90 students, as weak and not fit for occupation sometime ago. However, it took no steps to provide an alternative building to run the school.

The school on Thimmaiah B Cross Road, only about two km from Vidhana Soudha, collapsed around 2 am. A car, a goods auto and a scooter were damaged.

CONTINUED ON: P2

A backhoe clears the debris of the collapsed BBMP English nursery school at Shivajinagar in Bengaluru on Monday morning | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

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Capitalised terms not defined herein shall have the same meaning as assigned to such terms in the Prospectus dated November 22, 2023.

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Artificial lighting a big threat to fireflies?

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

CAN you remember the last time when you caught or chased fireflies? It is hard to recollect not just for those living in urban areas but also for those residing in villages.

According to researchers, there has been a drastic decline in the number of fireflies even in the Western Ghats. These are indicator species of the climax vegetation. Researchers from Environmental Management and Policy Research Institute (Empri) and Gandhi Krishi Vignana Kendra (GKVK) have taken up a study on beetle species and their ecological importance. Researchers from Empri have also taken up a study on fireflies titled, 'Fireflies: The glowing jewels of the wild'.

"One of the primary reasons for their decline is the increased use of artificial lighting. Electrification of villages and use of artificial lighting in the forests have affected them. Fireflies are also facing a threat from tourism activities such as construction of resorts and homestays in eco-sensitive areas. They are now unable to communicate with each other and call for mating because of artificial lighting," Dr AK Chakravarthy, researcher and principal investigator, told *TNIE*.

He said their habitat is shrinking because of construction works, especially in areas where roads are being widened. Fireflies are found in the Charmadi Ghat section, Brahmagiri, Lakkavalli, and routes connecting Chikkamagaluru and Kalasa.

A researcher from GKVK said studies in the US and Europe stated that proteins and enzymes found in fireflies help in cancer treatment. It is feared that fireflies are being captured for medical purposes. This aspect is also being studied and discussed with forest and other officials concerned.

> Fireflies are important and 58-62% of the species are endemic to India. There are 2,400 species, of which India has 50. The life cycle of fireflies is longer—an average of 250 days. But 90% of their life cycle is spent in the larval stage
>
> Dr AK Chakravarthy, researcher